

## “THERE’S SOMETHING IN MY EYE”

John 9:1-17, 24-34

My wife and I were involved with **Pine Springs Camp** for around 15 years. It was a great experience for our children and the nearly 1,000 children that attended every summer. What made the Camp special was not only its setting in the beautiful hills of Jennerstown, but the innovative and variety of summer programs. The staff was well trained and came up with many fun activities, one of which was the **Mud Pit.**

The **Mud Pit** was exactly what the name described. It was a lower piece of ground that collected water and dirt. You mix in a bunch of active kids, and you have a Mud Pit. It was interesting to watch the children’s various reactions to the **Mud Pit**. I imagine many of these children were told by their parents “**Don’t get dirty**” so the Mud Pit was challenging the rules. There were the cautious kids who would stick a toe in, like they were testing out hot water. Other children would get muddy up to their knees or waist. Some would have nothing to do with the Mud Pit whatsoever. And then there were my favorite kids. We get to break the rules! Hot Dog! They would jump in and be covered from head to toe with mud.

The only problem with playing in the **Mud Pit** was one could not just rinse off in the shower. All that mud would clog up the drain pipes. So after your mud pit adventure, you had to get hosed off, which the staff seemed to relish doing for some reason.

I mention the **Mud Pit** because this morning’s scripture passage involves some mud. Of course, no mud pit was involved but the man did get hosed off, so to speak. After doing so, this man’s life was forever changed. Isn’t that our hope in this season of Lent? That somehow through our interaction with Jesus our lives would be

different, that we would hear God’s voice, venture deeper out in the waters of the Spirit, and be transformed! Perhaps, we need a little mud.

## I. WHO’S AT FAULT?

Our story begins with a man who was born blind. Jesus and his disciples see this man and they ask Jesus, “**Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**” We aren’t told how they knew he was born blind. We discover later that he was a regular street beggar, so his story was probably known. But the nature of their question is one of **blame**. Somebody did something wrong and God is punishing the man with blindness.

Oh, we **love the blame game**, don’t we? We love to be the critic, point out the fault, and tell how much better we could have acted. Except of course when we are at fault. Then we want people to sympathize with us, and be so understanding, and take our side, and let us off the hook.

We especially like to blame the parents. They are such easy targets because there are no perfect parents. Sure there are some really bad, abusive parents who in my opinion should never have children. But for the rest of us there is no manual on How to be a Great Parent, how to always make the right decision, how to be firm but not overbearing, how to encourage but keep accountability, Lord knows most of us don’t remember how to teach high school math anymore. I believe most parents are doing the best they know how to do. But they aren’t perfect and they make mistakes, just like everyone else.

Notice, Jesus doesn’t play the blame game. He tells the disciples, “**Neither this man nor his parents sinned; He was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.**” Jesus isn’t ignoring sin in the world, after all he is the light of the world that exposes our sin. But rather than blaming Jesus affirms that this man has a purpose, which means he has value. God did not make a mistake or punish anyone.

The blind man's purpose was to show God's work in the world. That is our purpose too! Our lives are to reveal God is at work in us. Maybe we need one of those bright orange road construction signs that says God at Work ahead. It doesn't matter our limitations, God says, "I can work with that!" All we need to do is be open to God.

## II. THE MUD MASK

Have you ever played the penny party game? People, one by one, go around the room and say something they have never done. Like I have never flown on a plane, or I have never bungee jumped. And if any of the other players have flown on a plane or bungee jumped, they have to get rid of a penny. The winner is the one who has the most pennies left at the end of the game.

Well, if I was playing the penny game, I could say, "**I have never worn a mud mask.**" No amount of mud is going to make this face beautiful and spot free. In fact, I had to look online to see what mud masks were all about.

For instance, mud masks are known for their **antibacterial and exfoliating benefits**. Mud masks may remove impurities from the skin, unclog pores, absorb excess oils and have anti-inflammatory properties. What I didn't know, but made sense after I read it, is there are different types of mud from different places in the world. There are mud sources from the Dead Sea, volcanos, the moors, and even Iceland's Blue Lagoon which is a light-colored mud known for its cleansing benefits.

Apparently, Jesus knew something about the healing effects of mud because after he proclaims being the light of the world. "**...he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the blind man's eyes, saying to him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which means Sent.**"

I wonder what was going through this blind man's mind when all this was taking place. Up to this point he is only an object lesson for the disciples. He was begging for money, not a mud mask, although in truth it was only his eyes. He didn't ask to

be healed. If a total stranger walked up to any of us, spit on the ground, made mud and stuck it on our face we wouldn't be too happy about it.

As far as we know, the man never said a word. And surprisingly, he obeys Jesus and goes to wash off the mud in the pool of Siloam. By the way, this pool was almost 500 yards away, the length of 5 football fields. Why did the blind man go? Was he hoping for a miracle? Was it something in Jesus' voice? Did he throw his hands up and think what could it hurt to do as the man said? He had to wash his face off anyway. Still it took a certain amount of faith to follow the instructions and make the journey.

Strangely, the bible kind of downplays the miracle itself. Scripture simply states, "**Then he went and washed and came back able to see.**" This was almost like saying, "Well I ate breakfast today." Again, I wonder what the healed man experienced seeing the world for the very first time. We aren't told.

### III. WHO CAN REALLY SEE?

Here's what I want us to notice. This story is 41 verses long. It consists of seven acts, and Jesus is only in two of them, the first and the last scenes. Just like the children's different reactions to the **Mud Pit**, the bulk of the story is concerned with the various reactions to this man's healing. The theme of the story is who can really see and who is really blind.

#### A. His **NEIGHBORS** who can barely believe their eyes.

1. Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?
2. Others said, "No but it is someone like him."
3. **He kept saying – I am the man.**
4. "But how were your eyes opened?"

5. **Testimony** – “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash. Then I went and washed and received my sight.”

6. Where is he? **I don't know**. Let's take him to church!

B. **The PHARISEES** – The next reaction comes from the Pharisees. Remember, it was their job to affirm a healing took place. Recall the moments Jesus sent others to the priests to affirm their healing, in particular lepers. The Priests would examine, declare a person healed, and allow them back into the community.

C. **But these Pharisees have a problem**, actually they have several problems.

1. **Problem** they can't give credit where credit is do because they have stated publically that Jesus is a sinner – meaning God is not with him. To go back on their word would make them look foolish. Of course, does that mean God is not with them either, since we are all sinners?
2. **Problem** they can't deny the man can see. The crowd knows it.
3. **Problem** the parents testify he was born blind.
4. **Problem** Jesus broke the rules, their rules I might add, not God's, and healed on the Sabbath. To bless this event would be to deny their own rules.
5. **Problem** – they already declared that anyone who claimed Jesus to be the Messiah would be excommunicated.

After much examination the healed man calls them on the carpet with crystal clear logic. “**Here is the astonishing thing! You do not know where Jesus comes from and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the**

**world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”**

The Religious Leaders answered him, **“You were born entirely in sins and are you trying to teach us?”** These religious leaders do everything in their power to discredit the man and when that doesn’t work, they curse him and kick him out of the church, not because he has done anything wrong, not because he has broken one of their laws, not even because he can now see, **but because they refuse to**. The truth is staring at them in the face, and they will not accept it.

There is such a thing as having blind spots because we cannot see, but it is quite another to have blind spots because we refuse to see. The whole irony of the story is the blind man ends up seeing and the ministers are the blind ones.

It is easy to criticize these religious leaders of long ago, but are we any different? What are we refusing to see when the truth is staring at us in the face? What so called **“facts”** are getting in the way of the truth? What are we guarding so much that any critique or question makes us completely dismiss the critique or question? Are we choosing to be blind in our certainty?

In the film **Conclave**, **Ralph Fiennes** plays the fictional **Cardinal Thomas Lawrence**. At one point he makes this speech, “My brothers and sisters, in the course of a long life in the service of our **Mother the Church**, let me tell you that the one **sin** I have come to **fear** more than any other is **certainty**. Certainty is the great enemy of **unity**. Certainty is the deadly enemy of tolerance. Even Christ was not certain at the end. *‘Eli Eli, lama sabachtani?’* he cried out in His agony at the ninth hour on the cross. **‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’**”

The Cardinal ends, “Our **faith** is a living thing precisely *because* it walks hand in hand with **doubt**. If there was only certainty, and if there was no doubt, there would be no mystery, and therefore no need for faith.”

I believe our faith was meant to be something we wrestle with, something we don't fully understand, something that causes us to step into the Mud of life trusting that God wants to show us something, trusting that God is at work, trusting that when we wash, our eyes would be open to the Messiah standing in front of us. I doubt that we will never grasp everything, but we might just see enough truth that will transform our world to be more like Christ's. What is blinding you today? What does God want you to see? Perhaps, a little mud and a little Jesus, just might help. **Amen.**

**First Presbyterian Church in Hawley**  
**Sunday, March 15, 2026**  
**Second Scripture Lesson**

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**John 9:1-17, 24-34**

1 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.

4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes,

7 saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

8 The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"

9 Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he."

10 But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

11 He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."

12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

15 Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided.

17 So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."

25 He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

26 They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

27 He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

28 Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

30 The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.

31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.

32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.

33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be To God.**

